

[The Marshalls]

Mr. and Mrs. Earl Marshall,

Dana, N. C.

Farmer

Luline L. Mabry, writer.

THE MARSHALLS

No names changed. C 9 - N.C. Box [1?] -

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Route #2,

Hendersonville, N. C.

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Three times a week a neatly dressed, pleasant faced woman near middle age may be found occupying a prominent place in the Hendersonville Center Market, the table in front of her piled high with carefully arranged farm products of tempting appearance. Customers stop frequently and are always greeted with a friendly smile. When she handles the produce offered for sale, one notices both the smallness of her hands and the evidence they give of much hard work. The name of this woman is Mrs. Earl Marshall of Dana, a

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prosperous farming district to the East of Hendersonville. When asked to tell the story of her life, she did so readily and in a manner that did not betray the scantiness of her schooling at a time when the public school system had not yet reached its present degree of efficiency.

"Before my marriage I was Mary Justus," she started. "I was one of nine children and my parents were farmers with farmer ancestors back of them. They were raised on their parents' farms in what is known as Blue Ridge, seven or eight miles East of Hendersonville, not far from Dana. To them people living from two and a half to five miles away were 'close neighbors,' and there were few facilities and less time for visiting unless some of those neighbors were sick. If word to that effect reached 2 them, they went as soon as possible and did all they could for the sick family.

"My husband's people were always farmers, too, and he was one of a family of six children. His mother and father were Rebecca and Thomas Marshall, and in their early married life they had a farm 'way back in the mountains. Later they bought a place not far from Dana and my husband was born there. But on their first farm his parents simply had to dig a living from their land by the most primitive methods - sort of followed the processes used by the Indians. They had wooden plows, and their few other farming tools were equally as ancient and simple in design. But they raised wheat, corn, rye, oats, potatoes, and often a little patch of flax. This eventually found its way into the making of their table cloths and family towels. They only raised enough for their own use because in those days there was not much chace to dispose of any surplus. Getting things to a market was such a hard problem for most folks that they were satisfied to raise just about what they needed for themselves.

"Our grandmothers and grandfathers had to go through many hardships before they could even start raising anything. First the land had to be cleared. That meant to deaden large trees, later to be cut down. Then the stumps and roots had to be dug out and the land cleared of underbrush - all this before it could 3 be broken up with the old wooden plow

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drawn by stout oxen. They used to have log rollings and house raisings, and all sorts of 'get togethers' when the men from all the surrounding homes joined each other at a given place and plunged into the job to be done. Things moved fast at such times, and lots of work could be turned off with a number of men working all day together. Often the women folds came along, and there was a big dinner served picnic style at the edge of the clearing. Hot coffee, cornbread, buttermilk, and maybe a big glass of honey or jelly was always served. If there was time to prepare a pot of stewed chicken, that added such to the dinner. Everyone was always ready to work to return for a favor received, and it seems to me there was a more friendly spirit among people in those days than there is now. I believe people were happier and more contented with their lives, and they were healthier and lived longer, too.

"People in those days wasted wood by burning it up just to get it out of the way. Of course, with everybody living in log houses and knowing nothing about any other kind of building, there was no demand for lumber, and if there had been, it would have been impossible to locate a saw mill where it could be reached by any number of people because there were so few good roads in those days. So the great big trees as well as the smaller ones were just cut down and piled up with brush and set afire as a way of getting the land cleared for farming.

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"Earl and I sort of grew up together. It seems like I'd always known him because our farms were not so very far apart and we saw each other often as growing children. Then I guess it was just/ a natural thing that we decided that we'd always be happy together, so when we were old enough we just got married. That was in 1907. At that time the depression going on was even worse than the present one. There was no assistance offered to struggling farmers in those days. People in all walks of life just had to fight their own battles and manage as best they could. My husband managed to find a little work here and there which enabled us to live somehow, but of course as yet we had no crop, no start of any kind, and we just had to begin at scratch. What little work he did manage to

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find brought him only 40¢ a day, and very often he was not fully paid when the work was done.

“Groceries cost just about what they do today with only a few exceptions, but we had our youth and our pride and our inheritance of ambition. We never even thought of charity and would have been shocked if anyone had offered to help us in getting started in life.

“We soon rented a farm and managed to [?] out an existence until my husband got sick. When he was well enough in 1916, we went to live in Canton, N. C., because my husband could get work in the fiber mill there. After two years of that we decided to go to Norfolk, Va., where he could work in the shipyards and earn 5 more money, and we stayed there two more years. I also worked most of that time. You may be sure we saved out money all the time, and as soon as we felt that we had enough to give us a little start, we returned to Hendersonville and bought a little place on the time payments, of course. We managed to get enough farming tools and a few head of cattle, and then we began the serious business of getting a living out of an old farm with dilapidated buildings.

“It has taken us 30 years of the hardest kind of work and steady economy and application, but today we have our property in good repair, all paid for, and a car, also paid for, and we have the satisfaction of knowing it has all been done through our own efforts. No one had ever given us a penny. We have kept our self-respect, which is very dear to us, and we are comfortable today, although even now we have to borrow money almost every spring to make our crop, but we pay it back when the crop is harvested in the fall.

“We have seen so many people we know, situated as well as we are, grow discouraged and give up trying, and now the men are working three days a week and keeping their families on such earnings mostly. But we have never been tempted to give up our efforts, and gradually we have reached our goal. Our independence is as dear to us as our self-respect. We know that we are not increasing taxes for anyone, and that we have had no share in bringing about other conditions which we consider 6 undesirable.

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"If we find it necessary to hire help during the harvest time, or even at planting time, it is only hard to find a man that will help us, but we have to pay so much higher wages for this help that in the end we have to borrow a little money every spring. We think the Government is helping people in all walks of life more than it is the farmer, even while we hear the cry that the farmer is the backbone of the nation. Still we both vote year after year, and believe me, I vote to suit myself."

A merry twinkle in her clear blue eyes served to lend emphasis to her statement. "I think farmers expect too much these days. I think that nearly everybody expect too much. There ought to be some way of instilling into the minds of the people that they would be happier and better morally if they would all try to help themselves more and stop depending on other sources for their living. It has got too easy to get help from the Government and the people seem to be losing their independence and their pride. Of course, I know that there is need to help a great many people, those in sickness and those in other unfortunate conditions, but there are lots of people getting help today that are able to work and capable to getting a living by their own efforts if they would actually and honestly make the right efforts.

"This curb market has been a great help to lots of farmers and their families. I was one of the organizers and charter members and was on the first board of managers. It has given the farmer women more independence than they ever had before, and it had helped them to know more about business affairs, and, no doubt, had increased their understanding of management. They are better dressed, neater in appearance, have more pride in how they look, and have a little more money to spend than they used to.

"We organized this curb market on May 30, 1925, under the supervision of our county agent and our home agent. We took one woman from about every community in the county when we started. At first we held the market on Main Street, but after about two years of this the Rigby-Morrow Lumber Company furnished the lumber to put up a small

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building on this lot which we were renting at the time. Then we bought the lot, and about four years ago we incorporated and built the place we now occupy.

“We have traded this lot for one on Church Street which is larger and better located, and before spring we expect to erect a new market building over there. There will be much more parking space at the new location and we hope to do better in every way.

“We can all look back to the days when the best most of us could do with our produce was to go from house to house early in the mornings and peddle it. There were no established prices in those days either. The only other way we had of selling what we raised was to take it to the grocers. They only paid us about one-third of the market price for our stuff, and even then we had to trade it out in their stores. There was no money changing hands in those days.

“Now what we have this well organized market as an outlet for what we can produce, we have regular prices for everything, and much greater opportunities for disposing of what we can make or produce at home. There always has been and still is some ill feeling among the merchants about our business, but it is only because they do not give the matter the proper consideration. When the women of the curb market sell their home-made products, it is safe to say that before they return home almost every one of them go to some local store and buy some the things they want and need with the money they have take in during the morning at their tables. The townswomen are really the ones that go and spend their money in out-of-town stores if the merchants only knew it. Then the market has become a great attraction for the tourists in Hendersonville. So many of them enjoy meeting here in the market, and they appreciate the nice things we make to eat, and they buy a great deal of the craft work on display. They also leave orders for rug weaving, for aprons, and all sorts of hand-made articles, and it is surprising how much money they spend with us every summer.

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"There is a marked difference in the women who now operate 9 in the curb market compared to the days when we first started. Most of the farmers' wives thought all they had to do was to pull up their vegetables and get them to market where they would sell like hot cakes. But they soon found that there was to be keen competition here, so they began washing their vegetables, making them into neat bunches, and improving their displays in every way. We now have 129 tables in our market, and very often there are two families using one table. Then the women began to see who could make the prettiest jellies, jams, preserves and pickles, and canned fruits. It lead them into getting modern receipes for everything they made, and the result is that we have beautiful displays of everything imaginable in the way of good things to eat. The sanitary part of the matte has not been neglected either, and now all dressed meats and chickens, all pies, cakes, and cookies, and all foods that are displayed on plates or in dishes, are always neatly covered. Everything that is sold at our market much be a product of Henderson County. The women here are always trying to invent and develop new ideas in handwork to sell, and it is making people more resourceful and, as I said before, giving them more money to spend in all the stores in town for the things they want. They buy ready-made dressed, good coats, more shoes and hats, and spend a great deal of their money with the grocers for the materials that go into the making of their products offered for 10 sale. They all want nicer furniture in their homes and if they do well with their tables of home-made things of course they are able to get themselves more of the things they want."

Customers stopped at Mrs. Marshall's counter, passed pleasant greetings of the season, and went their way bearing their purchases of fresh yellow butter, rosy apples of enormous size, a dressed fat hen to bless the Thanksgiving table of someone, and between each transaction Mrs. Marshall resumed her easy-going talk:

"We always tithe, and when the Lord gives us an extra blessing we divide that also with our church. I think the churches should have charge of helping the needy because they should be, and in most cases are, in a position to know more than any other organization

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about who is suffering and in need of help in their community. While I never have been a very robust person, I have not had to spend a great deal with doctors, so we have been able to give more to our church. Of course, when we really need a doctor, we have one, but we try to keep ourselves in good health by the use of every kind of vegetable we raise, and we have plenty of butter, milk and eggs, and a reasonable amount of meat for our table.

“One great trouble with the poor people is that they have too many children. They should consider their circumstances and have only as many as they can take care of and raise decently.

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Only last Saturday I visited a family where there is sickness, and the home seemed just swarming with children. Such poor little ragged things, and all so dirty. The father is working three days a week and trying to keep his large family on what he earns. The women cut the wood and do most of the outside work around the place. Maybe they are happy this way, but to me it was pathetic.

“There is plenty of work to be done around our place, but I do my part in the house and my husband attends to all the outside work. We have about 1000 bearing apple trees, with perhaps 500 more coming on. We have all the newest varieties, most of them fall and winter apples, although of course we have some of the better early kinds. We have a rock house on our place for storing what we can, but we always have to store the main part of the crop in Hendersonville. We also have berries of different kinds, and with our regular crops for our stock, and our vegetable gardens, you can see that we do not have much time for visiting or amusements. It is so hard to find anyone we can trust to look after our three cows, our other stock, and our chickens, if we go away from home, so we have to stay close by.

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"While we have no children of our own, I am always interested in the problems of the young girls and boys I know, and at times I try to advise those who have no mothers to help them with their 12 difficulties. I very often find great satisfaction in knowing I have helped someone over a hard place. The greatest interest of my life is in doing my part toward bringing about the Kingdom of Christ on earth."

Looking into the comely face of this even-tempered and kindly woman as she talked, one somehow realized that she really is doing her full part in every way toward bringing some of her own happiness and peace into the lives of others.